

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION
(PCT Rule 61.2)

To:

Assistant Commissioner for Patents
 United States Patent and Trademark
 Office
 Box PCT
 Washington, D.C.20231
 ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE

in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 20 September 2000 (20.09.00)	To: Assistant Commissioner for Patents United States Patent and Trademark Office Box PCT Washington, D.C.20231 ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE in its capacity as elected Office
International application No. PCT/NZ99/00209	Applicant's or agent's file reference 10253
International filing date (day/month/year) 03 December 1999 (03.12.99)	Priority date (day/month/year) 03 December 1998 (03.12.98)
Applicant HANNA, Ashley, Robert	

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:

in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:

28 June 2000 (28.06.00)

in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election was

was not

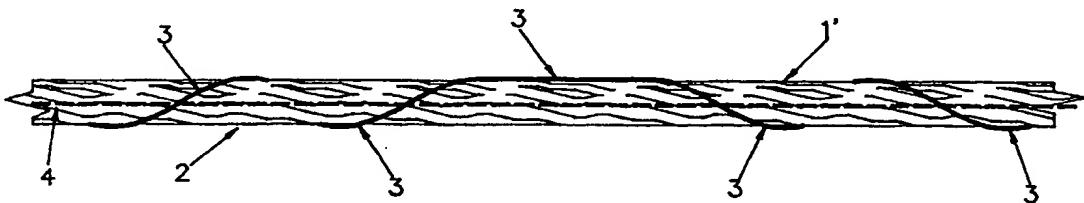
made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO 34, chemin des Colombettes 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35	Authorized officer Manu Berrod Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38
---	---

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification ⁷ : D01H 4/00, 7/92, D02G 3/36, 3/38		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 00/32857
			(43) International Publication Date: 8 June 2000 (08.06.00)
<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/NZ99/00209</p> <p>(22) International Filing Date: 3 December 1999 (03.12.99)</p> <p>(30) Priority Data: 333184 3 December 1998 (03.12.98) NZ</p> <p>(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): HANNA HOLDINGS LIMITED [NZ/NZ]; 37 Latimer Square, Christchurch (NZ).</p> <p>(72) Inventor; and</p> <p>(75) Inventor/Applicant (for US only): HANNA, Ashley, Robert [NZ/NZ]; 4 Sepia Lane, Christchurch (NZ).</p> <p>(74) Agent: BUCHANAN, Elspeth, Victoria; P.L. Berry & Associates, P.O. Box 1250, Christchurch (NZ).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: AE, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW, ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).</p> <p>Published <i>With international search report.</i></p>	

(54) Title: IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO FIBRE YARN AND ROPE PRODUCTION



(57) Abstract

The invention relates to an unspun yarn comprising a longitudinal main rope body (1'), formed from at least one fibre assembly of substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, and at least one reinforcing thread (3, 5) helically wound around said main rope body (1') and extending there along in a single longitudinal direction, wherein at predetermined intervals the direction in which the reinforcing thread (3, 5) is wound around said main rope body (1') is reversed.

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AL	Albania	ES	Spain	LS	Lesotho	SI	Slovenia
AM	Armenia	FI	Finland	LT	Lithuania	SK	Slovakia
AT	Austria	FR	France	LU	Luxembourg	SN	Senegal
AU	Australia	GA	Gabon	LV	Latvia	SZ	Swaziland
AZ	Azerbaijan	GB	United Kingdom	MC	Monaco	TD	Chad
BA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	GE	Georgia	MD	Republic of Moldova	TG	Togo
BB	Barbados	GH	Ghana	MG	Madagascar	TJ	Tajikistan
BE	Belgium	GN	Guinea	MK	The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	TM	Turkmenistan
BF	Burkina Faso	GR	Greece	ML	Mali	TR	Turkey
BG	Bulgaria	HU	Hungary	MN	Mongolia	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
BJ	Benin	IE	Ireland	MR	Mauritania	UA	Ukraine
BR	Brazil	IL	Israel	MW	Malawi	UG	Uganda
BY	Belarus	IS	Iceland	MX	Mexico	US	United States of America
CA	Canada	IT	Italy	NE	Niger	UZ	Uzbekistan
CF	Central African Republic	JP	Japan	NL	Netherlands	VN	Viet Nam
CG	Congo	KE	Kenya	NO	Norway	YU	Yugoslavia
CH	Switzerland	KG	Kyrgyzstan	NZ	New Zealand	ZW	Zimbabwe
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	PL	Poland		
CM	Cameroon	KR	Republic of Korea	PT	Portugal		
CN	China	KZ	Kazakhstan	RO	Romania		
CU	Cuba	LC	Saint Lucia	RU	Russian Federation		
CZ	Czech Republic	LI	Liechtenstein	SD	Sudan		
DE	Germany	LK	Sri Lanka	SE	Sweden		
DK	Denmark	LR	Liberia	SG	Singapore		
EE	Estonia						

Title IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO FIBRE YARN AND ROPE PRODUCTIONTechnical Field

This invention relates to the production of yarns and ropes, and more particularly relates to the production of relatively high strength yarns utilising wool or other fibre slubbings or like which are loosely joined drawn and unspun or partially spun/intertwined fibres or filaments.

Background

The majority of yarns produced at present are spun with real twist. In one method of manufacture, spun yarns are produced by firstly straightening and untangling fibres by a carding-type process, to produce a flat web of fibres which is then divided across its width into narrow ribbons which are passed between rubbing aprons to consolidate the fibres into rounded and continuous structures, called slubbings. Such slubbings and like loosely joined lengths of fibres for use in spinning processes may be completely untwisted or they may have a slight degree of twist or false twist sufficient to enable them to be handled easily prior to spinning. Conventionally, slubbings may be provided with up to about one-half turn of twist per inch of length and as such they tend to have a low tensile strength and can easily be pulled apart by hand. The slubbings are then formed into yarns for weaving, knitting and other purposes by spinning processes and machinery, which can be quite complicated for commercial operations. The strength of the finished yarn is in most instances determined by the extent or degree of twisting of the fibres into their interlocked form i.e. the tighter the twist, the stronger the finished yarn. However, the tighter twisting also reduces the thickness of the finished yarn and creates a 'hardness' to fabrics woven from or articles knitted with such tight spun yarns. In the case of natural wool like fibre yarns and fabrics or articles produced therefrom, there is a loss of the desirable springy soft feel and thermal insulation qualities inherent with unspun or partially spun fibre yarns and fabrics/articles produced therewith.

A further problem with typical spun yarns (being a problem that increases with tighter spinning), is that when released from the tension applicable when the yarn is wound into a tight ball or onto a bobbin i.e. on unwinding for use in fabric or article forming,

there is the tendency of the yarn to at least partially untwist. This can lead to entanglement and/or difficulties in feed to needles and/or machinery for processing; and in some instances can create a tendency in a finished fabric or article to twist out of the desired finished shape. Similarly, fibrous ropes, strings, cords and the like 5 formed with tightly spun fibres in a similar manner to spun yarns can be prone to a partial untwisting tendency and entanglement when released from a coil.

Hereinafter, for ease of reference, articles conventionally produced by the spinning processes described above will be referred to by the term "spun yarns".

US Patent No. 4,003,194 discloses a yarn with a core of false-twisted or loosely 10 twisted or untwisted fibres and a wrapping of threads or fibres helically wound in one direction around the outside of the core. In this arrangement, as there is relative twist between the core and the wrapping, the wrapping tends to untwist if the yarn is cut or snagged.

US Patent No. 3,458,987 discloses a variation of this type of yarn structure in which 15 the wrapping is formed from threads helically wound in opposite directions around the core, and the wrapping threads are melted or glued so that they adhere to each other at their cross-over points. Due to the complexity of this arrangement, the manufacturing process is very expensive and the yarn is produced at a relatively low rate.

20 In New Zealand Patent No. 194391, the present inventor addressed the problems associated with the prior art by providing an unspun yarn with an interlocked stitched cover to provide constraint and support for the fibre assembly or core. It will be apparent to the person skilled in the art that the production of such yarn is largely dependent upon the speed of operation of the stitch-forming machine. Here again, the 25 production rate can be relatively low.

An object of the present invention is to provide an unspun fibre yarn having equal or greater strength than many conventional spun fibre yarns (produced from similar fibres), and without the inherent tendency to twist or untwist common to such conventional spun yarns.

30 Another object of the invention is to provide a method and means for producing a relatively high strength yarn utilising predominantly loosely joined drawn or carded fibres (slubbings) in conjunction with longitudinal reinforcing threads and without

spinning in the conventional manner on conventional yarn spinning machinery, so that the end product yarn retains the fibres in a relatively loose format secured against accidental lateral and longitudinal separation.

Further objects of the invention are to provide a versatile unspun fibre high strength 5 yarn capable of high speed and relatively low cost production in comparison with conventionally spun yarns, and to provide the method and machinery by which the unspun fibre yarn can be produced.

Other and more particular objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the ensuing description.

10

Disclosure of Invention

According to a first aspect of this invention there is provided an unspun yarn comprising a longitudinal main rope body, formed from at least one fibre assembly of substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, and at least one reinforcing thread helically 15 wound around said main rope body and extending there along in a single longitudinal direction, wherein at predetermined intervals the direction in which the reinforcing thread is wound around said main rope body is reversed. The provision of a reinforcing thread wrapped around the main rope body in this manner confines the fibres against complete separation whilst enabling the fibres to retain their inherent 20 springiness and some freedom of movement relative to adjacent fibres.

Preferably, two such reinforcing threads are provided about the main rope body, a first such thread being wound in one direction and the other being wound in the opposite direction in longitudinal juxtaposition with the first reinforcing thread.

Furthermore, a longitudinal reinforcing core thread may be incorporated within the 25 main rope body. Preferably the core thread is crimped to allow at least some longitudinal stretch of the unspun yarn.

The fibres used in the fibre assembly may all be of one single type. Alternately, a combination of fibres having different characteristics may be employed. For example, the fibres may vary in their colours, strengths, textures or origin. In a similar manner,

were more than one fibre assembly is used to form the main rope body, the fibre assemblies may have different characteristics.

Preferably, any reinforcing thread incorporated in the unspun yarn is of a neutral colour so as to tone in with the main rope body.

- 5 According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of forming an unspun yarn comprising the steps of providing at least one continuous or substantially continuous fibre assembly of substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, providing at least one continuous or substantially continuous source of a reinforcing thread, forming the or each said fibre assembly into a longitudinal main rope body;
- 10 intermittently imparting opposing twists to alternate sections of the main rope body whilst drawing a first reinforcing thread longitudinally into surface contact with a twisted section of the main rope, allowing the twisted section of the main rope body to engage the adjacent section of the first reinforcing thread, releasing the opposing twists in the twisted section of the rope body causing the engaged first reinforcing thread to wrap
- 15 around the section of the main rope body.

In a further aspect, the invention provides an apparatus for producing an unspun yarn comprising a supply source for a longitudinal main rope body formed from at least one fibre assembly of substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, at least one partial twist means through which the main rope body is to be passed from the supply source via a

- 20 first guide means in juxtaposition with said twist means, drive means for operating said twist means to cause intermittent reverse operation to impart a twist in one direction to longitudinal first sections of said main rope body alternating with a twist in the opposite direction of longitudinal second sections of said main rope body intermediate said the first sections, second guide means positioned beside said twist means arranged to
- 25 locate and guide a reinforcing thread from a supply source into helical wrapping engagement longitudinally about said main rope body as the main rope body passes through the partial twist means and drawing means for drawing said main rope body

and reinforcing thread through said partial twist means.

Brief Description of Drawings

Some preferred aspects of the invention will be described by way of example and with
5 reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic enlargement of a section of a typical rope of the drawn
fibres forming the base main rope body part of the unspun reinforced yarn to be
formed;

10 Figure 2 is a diagrammatic slightly enlarged illustration of a length of the partially
formed yarn with a single enwrapping reinforcing thread in accordance with the
invention;

Figure 3 is a diagrammatic illustration similar to Figure 2, but with two enwrapping
reinforcing threads in accordance with the invention;

15 Figure 4 is a plan view diagrammatically illustrating one form of apparatus in
accordance with the invention;

Figure 5 is a view in the direction of arrows V-V of figure 4.

Figure 6 is a plan view of a second embodiment of the apparatus of the present
invention; and

Figure 7 is a diagrammatic enlargement of a yarn formed by the apparatus of Figure 6.

20

Description of Invention

Whilst not confined to such applications, the invention is particularly applicable to and
will be described with reference to fibre yarns formed with natural wool fibres, which
are renowned for the production of knitting and weaving yarns and have excellent
25 wear, thermal insulation and other desirable qualities; such fibres have an inherent
springiness and are readily formed and bonded into yarns (normally by spinning and
twisting the fibres all in the one helical direction). Prior to the spinning process the

wool fibres are carded and formed in slubbings or long ropes of loosely longitudinally entwined fibres such as that diagrammatically shown in figure 1, and generally indicated by the arrow 1. Such slubbings 1 are employed as the base main confined rope body 1' in the yarns formed in accordance with the present invention.

5 Contrary to conventional yarn production, in the present invention uses a fibre assembly such as a wool slubbing 1 which is not spun and permanently twisted, but is only subjected to a partial compression and partial twisting and untwisting in short longitudinal sections so that in the finished yarn state the wool fibres of the main rope body 1' remain substantially in their original longitudinally intermingled and joined 10 slubbing state, varied only according to the extent of compression and drawing tension applied by the manufacturing method and apparatus as required for the final wool yarn thickness and intended purpose. The main rope body 1' per se thus has little tensile strength, and the desired higher strength of the finished yarn 2 is provided as shown in the first example of figure 2 by at least one reinforcing thread 3 which is wrapped 15 externally about the main rope body 1' to restrict lateral separation of the fibres without preventing fibre movement within the general confines of the yarn nominal thickness. The reinforcing thread 3 can be a single filament of a synthetic material, but is preferably formed from a plurality of fine natural or synthetic fibres or filaments of any suitable kind having the desired finished thinness flexibility and tensile strength. As 20 the yarn 2 is not spun in the usual manner, the reinforcing thread 3 is applied by laying alongside the main rope body 1' and twisting/un-twisting (or reverse twisting) short sections of the main rope body 1' of wool fibres. The arrangement allows a significant degree of longitudinal stretching and return to its original size (under the inherent 'clinging' and resilience or 'springiness' of the entwined or entangled wool fibres), 25 whilst deterring longitudinal separation of the fibres and breaking of the finished yarn 2. If required, added tensile strength to the yarn 2 can be obtained with the provision of a core reinforcing thread (as indicated in broken line 4) within the slubbing 1 and main rope body 1'; but as a plain core thread 4 would prevent any longitudinal stretching of the finished wool yarn 2, it would be preferable that any such core thread 30 4 be crimped to allow at least some stretch and return in the finished yarn 2.

With reference to figure 3 of the drawings, for improved lateral confining of the wool fibres against undue separation, and for improved tensile strength without unduly restricting longitudinal stretch and return of the finished yarn 2, two externally applied and wrapped reinforcing threads 3 and 5 are provided; the second external reinforcing

thread 5 being applied in counter helical directions to those of the first external reinforcing thread 3 to assist in retention in position of such first thread 3.

Referring now to figures 4 and 5 of the drawings, one form of apparatus for performing the method and producing the yarn 2 of this invention includes support means (not shown) of any suitable kind and construction mounting a pair of similar endless loop belt and pulley arrangements (generally indicated by the arrow 6) which are arranged to impart some initial compression of and partial twist to the main rope body 1' and enable the reinforcing threads 3 and 5 to be twisted and wrapped about the main rope body 1'. The belt and pulley arrangement 6 includes a first input belt 7 (e.g. a Vee section belt) located about a freely rotatable pulley wheel 8 and a driven pulley wheel 9, and a second similar output belt 10 located about a freely rotatable pulley wheel 11 and a driven pulley wheel 12. Pulley wheels 8 and 11 can be on a common horizontal transverse axle 13 (or be separately mounted with a common axis), and the drive pulley wheels 9 and 12 can be located on a common axis 14 parallel with axle 13 and driven by a common power source or main common transmission 15 operated by any suitable power source (not shown) for intermittent reversible rotating of the drive pulley wheels 9 and 12. However, the arrangement includes intermediate transmission means 15a whereby the input belt drive pulley 9 operates in the reverse direction to that of the output belt drive pulley wheel 12, so the upper and lower runs 7a, 7b of the input belt 7 are reciprocally movable in the opposite directions to those of the upper and lower runs 10a, 10b of the output belt 10 for the purpose hereinafter described.

For the single yarn 2 production exampled, the medial portions of the lower belt runs 7b, 10b are raised into close proximity with the respective upper belt runs 7a, 10a such as by location over a pair of spaced freely rotatable intermediate rollers 16; the lower belt runs 7b, 10b passing over a lower support member 17, and there being an upper pressure bar or plate member 18 located in vertically adjustable parallel relationship thereover and above the upper belt runs 7a, 10a to enable an operator to load the apparatus with the required slubbing(s) 1 and reinforcing threads 19 and 20 (two reinforcing threads in this illustration) and make adjustments as required for the slubbing 1 thickness and desired effective belt pressure thereon.

The slubbing 1 and reinforcing threads 19, 20 are supplied to belts 7 and 10 from suitable continuous (or substantially continuous) supply sources, such as rotatably mounted bobbins or reels 1a, 19a and 20a, respectively, of the slubbing 1 and threads

19, 20. Preferably, there are any suitable tension and/or reel rotation retarding means (not shown) to maintain the slubbing 1 and threads 19, 20 under slight tension for smooth operation and prevent unwanted unravelling during operation of the apparatus. The slubbing 1 is fed to the input belt via a first helical or spiral wire guide 21 mounted on the lower support member 17. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate a further similar helical or spiral wire guide 21' not in use, whereby a second supply of the same or a different colour 1" or any other decorative or reinforcing yarn or thread from a supply source 1a" can be incorporated in the yarn to be produced. A first reinforcing thread 19 is supplied to the portion or section of the slubbing 1/main rope body 1' between the two belts 7 and 10 via a loop guide 22 mounted on the support member 17 close to the inner side of the input belt 7; and the second reinforcing thread 20 is supplied to the combined slubbing 1/main rope body 1' via a next loop guide 23 positioned adjacent the output belt 10 at the yarn exit side thereof. A further main loop guide 28 for the slubbing 1/main rope body 1' and enwrapping first reinforcing thread can be provided on the support member 17 medially between the belts 7 and 10.

The yarn components, main rope body 1 and enwrapping (as hereinafter described) reinforcing threads 19 and 20, are drawn under prescribed (adjustable to suit) tension through and from the partial compressing and twist applying belt arrangement 6 by means of a pair of horizontal parallel axis co-operating compression rollers 24, 25 (via any suitable intermediate guide and/or tensioning means 26 as may be required for direction and/or yarn tension control). The rollers 24,25 can be driven by an independent power source or the same power source for operation of the belt arrangement 6. The finished yarn 2 is preferably wound onto a large driven spool, bobbin, reel or like receiving means 27 for commercial use as is, or for subsequent re-distribution in small amounts in ball form or on smaller bobbins as may be required.

In operation of the apparatus (and performance of the yarn manufacturing method) a section of the slubbing1/main rope body 1' is drawn between the upper and lower runs 7a,7b and 10a,10b of the belts 7 and 10. Since the belts 7 and 10 are moving in opposite directions, as they grip either end of the section of the main rope body 1', they impart a twist therein. A first reinforcing thread 19 is positioned adjacent to and engages with the twisted section of the main rope body 1' and as the twist is released the reinforcing thread is wrapped helically about the main rope body 1'. This thus provides that the first reinforcing thread 19 wraps itself helically and fairly lightly about the section of slubbing 1/main rope body 1' drawn between the two belts 7 and 10,

alternately first in one direction and then in the opposite direction; and as the combined main rope body 1' and enwrapping first reinforcing thread 19 continue through and exit from the output belt 10, the almost immediate untwisting of the combination (due to the inherent resilience and springiness of the wool fibres) causes 5 the second reinforcing thread 20 supplied to the exit and untwist point to wrap around the main rope body 1' and first reinforcing thread in longer pitch helical sections, counter to the helical directions of the first reinforcing thread 19, to restrict unravelling of the latter.

Whilst the illustrated and described apparatus provides for the manufacture of a single 10 yarn, it will be appreciated that a number of the yarns can be simultaneously produced on the one twin belt arrangement 6 with duplication of the yarn component partial compression and twist points, with the associated similar guides 21, 22 and 23, at spaced intervals along the length of the section of the belt runs 7a, 7b and 10a, 10b located in close proximity. A common support member 17 or separate support 15 members 17 can be provided below the lower belt runs 7b and 10b for the respective points of twist and guides 21, 22 and 23, but preferably individual upper adjustable pressure members 18 are provided. Separate sources of supply 1a, 19a and 20a of the wool slubbings 1 and reinforcing threads 19 and 20 will then be provided for the respective yarns 2 to be formed.

20 In a modification of the invention the upper adjustable pressure members 18 can be dispensed with and replaced by rotatable cam members which intermittently bear on the upper surface of the upper belt runs 7a and 10a to urge such upper belt runs 7a and 10a into engagement with the slubbings 1 or main rope bodies 1'.

A second embodiment of the invention is shown in Fig. 6. In this embodiment, the 25 general layout and operation of the apparatus are similar to Fig.s 4 and 5 except as specifically described below.

As shown in Fig. 6, the apparatus comprises a series of four parallel belts 30-33 inclusive, each driven between opposed pairs of drive pulleys (not shown) by any suitable drive means.

30 The first belt 30, is driven continuously in the direction of arrow A and is used to impart a first twist to a slubbing, as hereinafter described. The remaining three belts, 31-33

are reciprocated in the directions of arrows B/C, with all three belts 31-33 moving in the same direction at the same time.

Over the central portions of the runs of the belts 30-33, the upper and lower runs of the belts are pressed together by a pre-set amount, using any suitable means (not shown)

5 e.g. a raised table underneath the lower run of the belt.

Three spaced parallel sets of loop guides 34-41 are arranged on each side of each belt 30-33, to guide a slubbing 1 as it passes through the belts.

In operation, a slubbing 1 is drawn through the apparatus in the direction of arrows 5, as described with reference to Fig. 4 and 5. The slubbing passes through the loop 10 guides 3-41. As the slubbing 1 passes through the belt 30, the friction between the belt and the slubbing imparts a twist to the slubbing, to give the slubbing some initial compression and cohesion. Most of this twist is lost as the slubbing progresses through the remainder of the apparatus.

At each of the remaining belts 31-33, the slubbing passes between the opposed runs 15 of the reciprocating belts, so that the slubbing has one section twisted one way, then the next section twisted the other way as the slubbing moves relative to the reciprocating belts. All of this twisting produces a series of false twists in opposite directions along the length of the slubbing. As the slubbing leaves each belt, its natural resilience opposes the false twist imparted by the belt, and the slubbing starts 20 to untwist. Reinforcing threads 42, 43, 44 are fed through loop guides 36, 38, 40 respectively, adjacent the intake sides of each of the belts 31-33. Thus, the corresponding reinforcing thread lies adjacent the slubbing and is wrapped around the slubbing as the false twist is imparted by the corresponding belt, and is then wrapped still further as the slubbing starts to untwist after leaving the belt.

25 The finished product emerging from the apparatus is shown in Fig. 7 - the slubbing 1 is wrapped in the three reinforcing threads 42, 43, 44.

Although three false-twist belts 31-33 are shown, it will be appreciated that only a single such belt may be used, or additional false-twist belts may be added. Similarly, only a single reinforcing thread may be used, or any number of such threads, 30 depending upon the required characteristics of the end product.

Up to three slubbings may be run through the apparatus at once, one for each set of loop guides 34-41. However, wider apparatus can be used to process more than three slubbings simultaneously.

The initial twist belt 30 may be omitted, depending upon the initial strength of the 5 slubbing.

As spinning of the yarn does not take place, the apparatus or machinery required for production of the yarn in accordance with the invention is not as complicated as conventional yarn producing apparatus and significantly faster yarn production is possible; thus enabling considerable costs savings in production as well as providing a 10 yarn having the anti twist finished structure and the other previously mentioned advantages of flexibility, softer feel and retention or maximising of the inherent wool fibre springiness and thermal insulation qualities.

The invention has been particularly described with reference to the production of wool fibre based yarns for knitting and weaving into articles, but it will be apparent that a 15 considerable variety of types and thickness of yarns can be produced for various purposes, including tufted and looped carpet manufacture; and that the invention is similarly applicable to the economic manufacture of ropes and cords of various kinds. The yarns ropes and cords etc can be produced utilising a variety of fibres and fibre mixes, including crimped synthetic fibres or filaments for the main loose fibre rope 20 body and the stronger thinner reinforcing threads.

Some preferred aspects of the invention have been described by way of example and many other variations of and modifications to the invention can take place without departing therefrom.

CLAIMS:

1. An unspun yarn comprising a longitudinal main rope body, formed from at least one fibre assembly of substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, and at least one reinforcing thread helically wound around said main rope body and extending therealong in a single longitudinal direction, wherein at 5 predetermined intervals the direction in which the reinforcing thread is wound around said main rope body is reversed.
2. An unspun yarn according to claim 1, wherein at least one second reinforcing 10 thread is provided and helically wound around the main rope body.
3. An unspun yarn according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the main rope body further includes a longitudinal reinforcing core thread.
- 15 4. An unspun yarn according to claim 3, wherein the reinforcing core thread is crimped to permit longitudinal stretch thereof.
5. An unspun yarn according to any preceding claim, wherein the fibres of the fibre assembly are wool rovings or slubbings.
- 20 6. An unspun yarn according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein a combination of different fibres are used in the fibre assembly.
7. A method of forming an unspun yarn comprising the steps of providing at 25 least one continuous or substantially continuous fibre assembly of substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, providing at least one continuous or substantially continuous source of a reinforcing thread, forming the or each

said fibre assembly into a longitudinal main rope body; intermittently imparting opposing twists to alternate sections of the main rope body whilst drawing a first reinforcing thread longitudinally into surface contact with a twisted section of the main rope body, allowing the twisted section of the main rope body to engage the adjacent section of the first reinforcing thread, releasing the opposing twists in the twisted section of the rope body causing the engaged first reinforcing thread to wrap around the section of the main rope body.

5 8. A method according to claim 7, wherein a second reinforcing thread is
10 separately drawn into engagement with an alternately twisted section of the
combined main rope body and first reinforcing thread.

15 9. A method according to claim 7 or claim 8, further including the feeding
together of two or more fibre assemblies to form said main rope body.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein the fibre assemblies have differing
characteristics.

11. A method according to any of claims 7 to 8, wherein a core reinforcing thread
20 is introduced into the main rope body.

12. An apparatus for producing an unspun yam comprising a supply source for a
longitudinal main rope body formed from at least one fibre assembly of
substantially untwisted and parallel fibres, at least one partial twist means
25 through which the main rope body is to be passed from the supply source via
a first guide means in juxtaposition with said twist means, drive means for
operating said twist means to cause intermittent reverse operation to impart a

twist in one direction to longitudinal first sections of said main rope body alternating with a twist in the opposite direction of longitudinal second sections of said main rope body intermediate said the first sections, second guide means positioned beside said twist means arranged to locate and 5 guide a reinforcing thread from a supply source into helical wrapping engagement longitudinally about said main rope body as the main rope body passes through the partial twist means and drawing means for drawing said main rope body and reinforcing thread through said partial twist means.

10 13. An apparatus according to claim 12 provided with a plurality of successive partial twist means and a means for introducing a separate reinforcing thread to the main rope body before it is drawn into each successive twist means.

15 14. An apparatus according to claim 12 or claim 13 wherein the or each partial twist means comprises a first input endless loop belt and a second output endless loop belt both located in spaced parallel relationship for intermittent reversible movement, said loop belts being arranged to grip and twist the main rope body as it passes transversely between the opposing runs of both the belts.



Fig. 1.

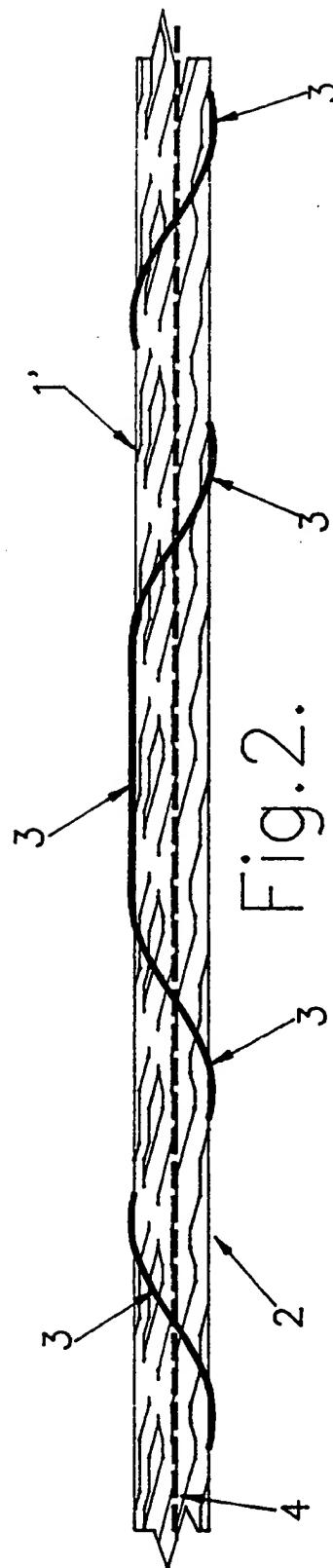


Fig. 2.

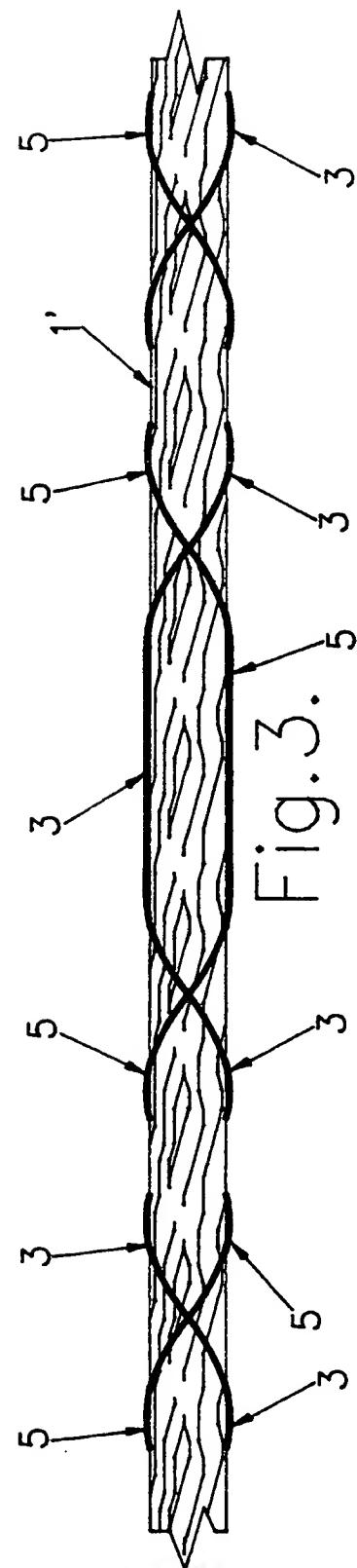
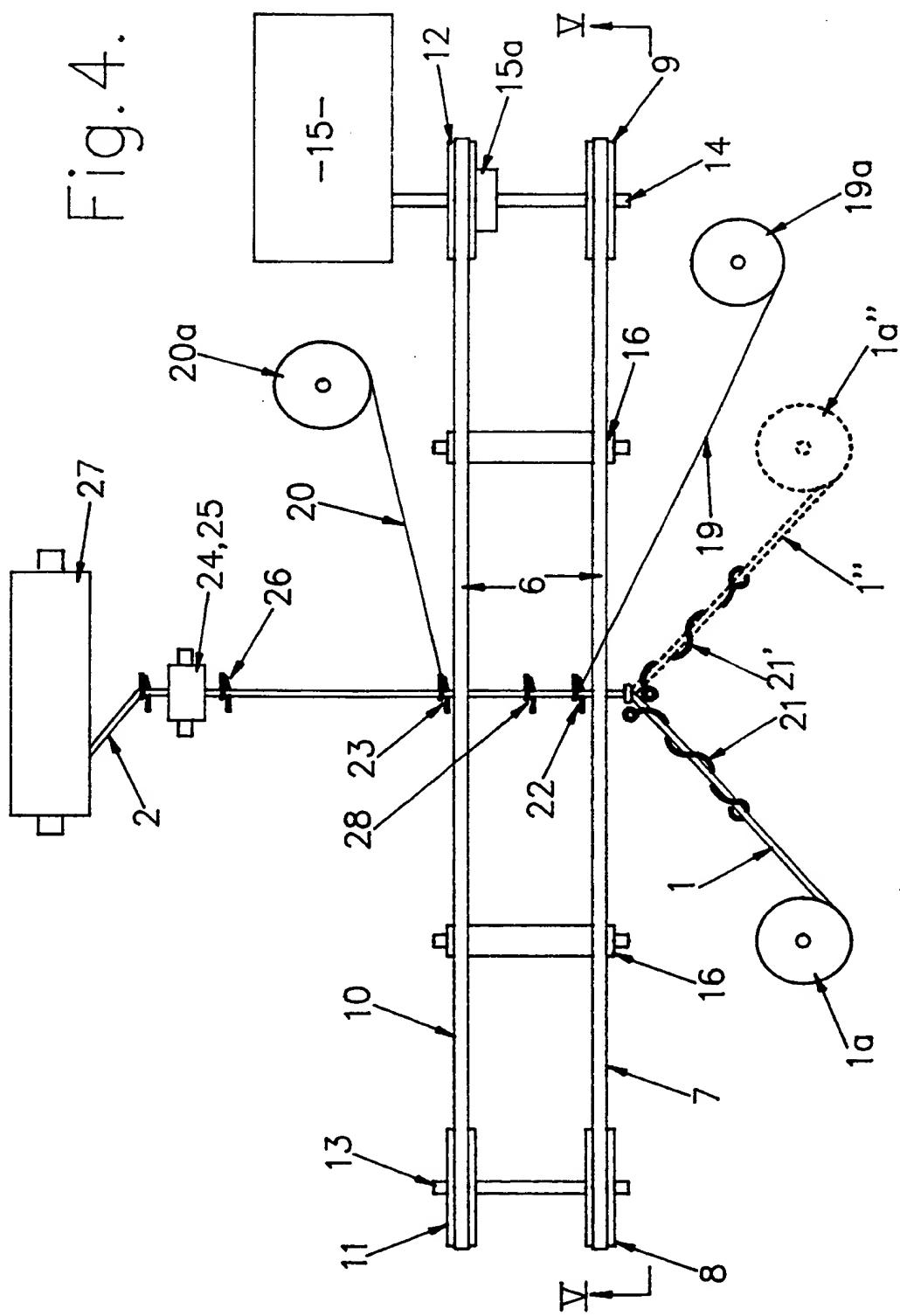


Fig. 3.

Fig. 4.



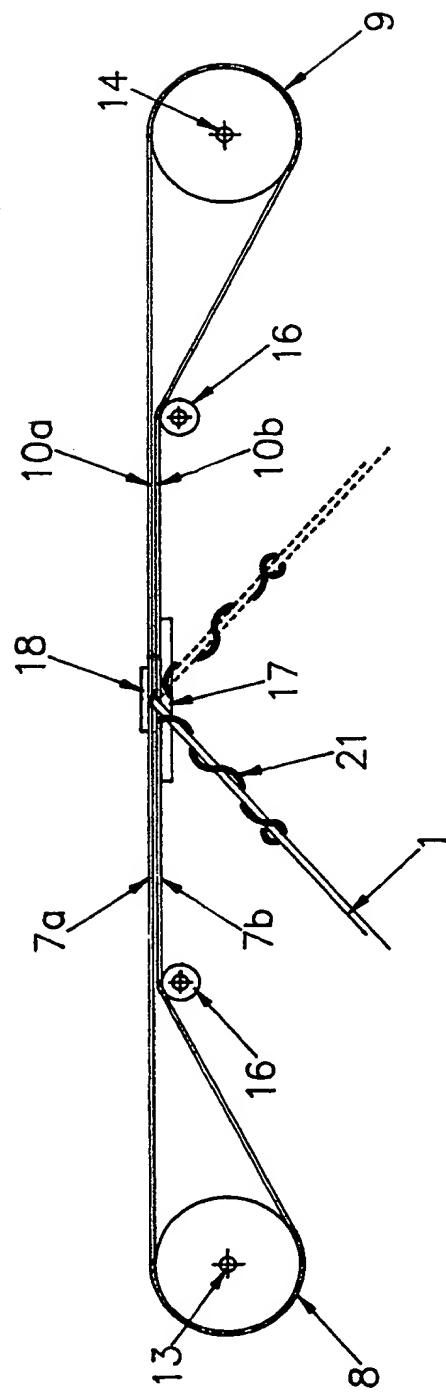


Fig. 5.

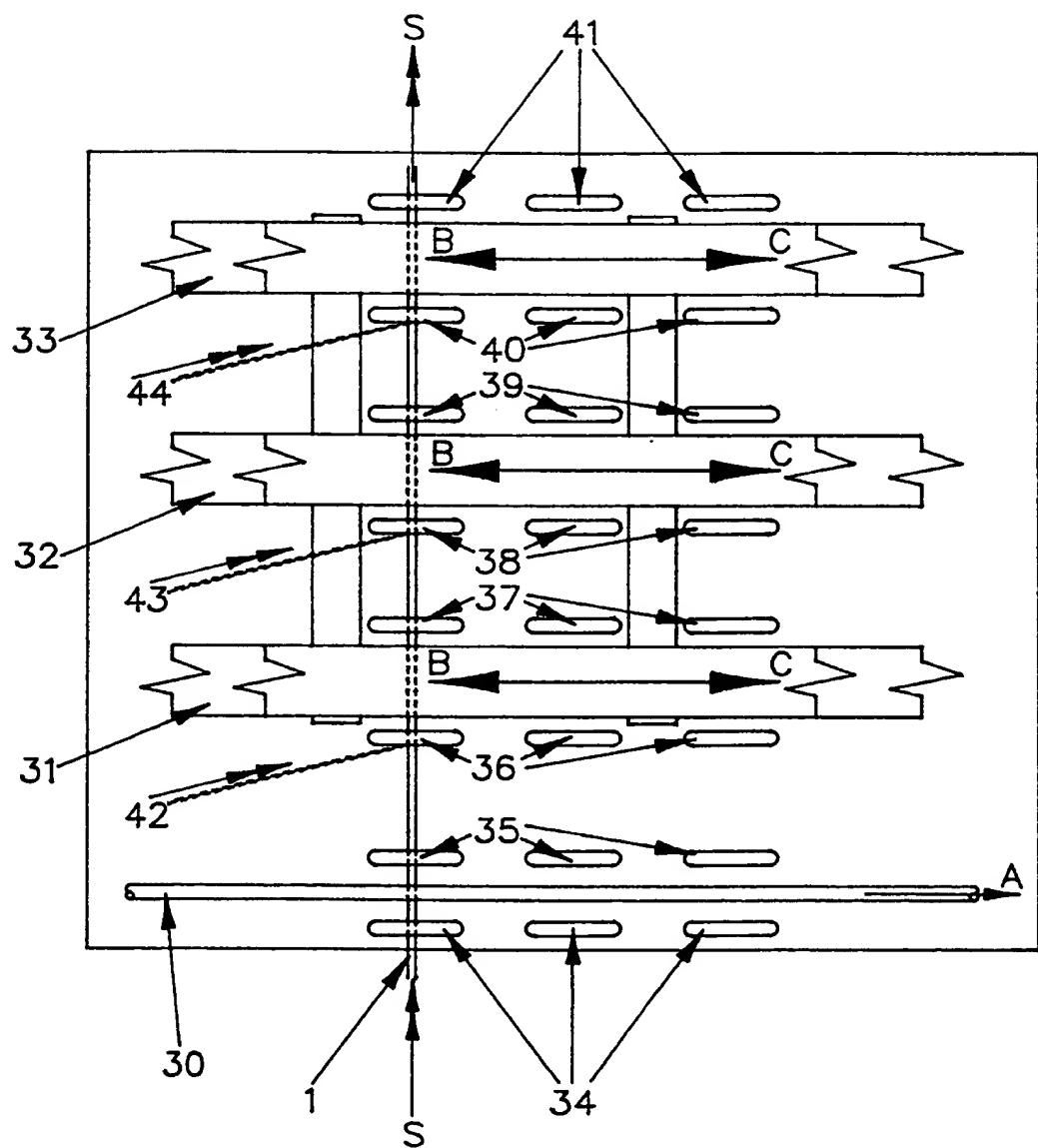


Fig. 6.

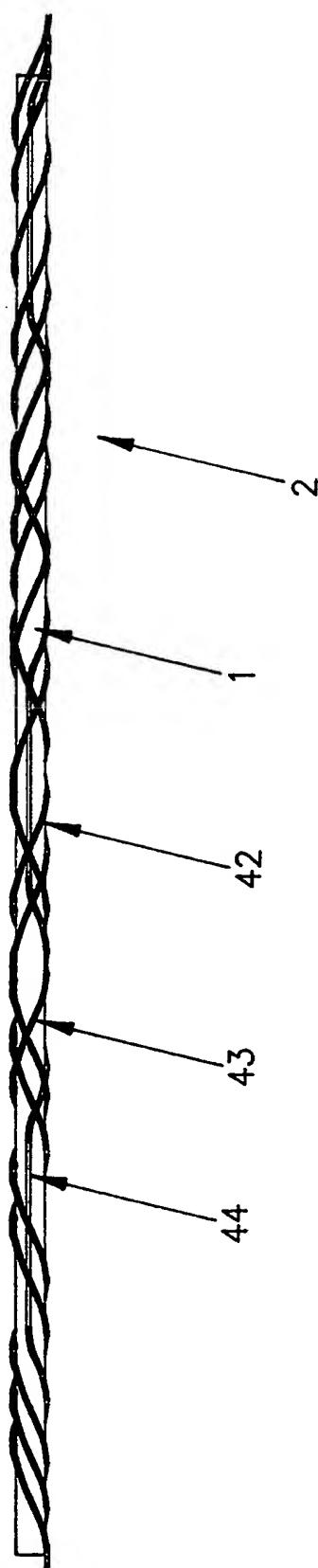


Fig. 7.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/NZ 99/00209

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

Int Cl⁷: D01H 4/00, 7/92, D02G 3/36, 3/38

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC: IPC as above

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WPAT: & JAPIO: IPC as above and keywords

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	DE 3634237 A1 (STAHLCKER) 14 April 1988	
A	US 4016714 A (CRANDALL) 12 April 1977	
A	US 4921756 A (TOOLBERT et.al.) 1 May 1990	

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C See patent family annex

* Special categories of cited documents:	
"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date	"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	"&" document member of the same patent family
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search
15 February 2000Date of mailing of the international search report
21 FEB 2000Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU
AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE
PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA
E-mail address: pct@ipaaustralia.gov.au
Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929Authorized officer

VINCE BAGUSAUSKAS
Telephone No.: (02) 6283 2110

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

International application No.
PCT/NZ 99/00209

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report	Patent Family Member
DE 3634237	
US 4016714	
US 4921756	AT 114339 AU 40983/89 CA 1322135 CN 1045284 EP 385025
	JP 2234936 KR 9306011
	END OF ANNEX

15
TENT COOPERATION TREATY
PCT
INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 10253	FOR FURTHER ACTION	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416).
International application No. PCT/NZ99/00209	International filing date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 3 December 1999	Priority Date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 3 December 1998
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC Int. Cl. 7 D01H 4/00, 7/92, D02G 3/36, 3/38		
Applicant HANNA HOLDINGS LIMITED et al		

1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.																
2. This REPORT consists of a total of 3 sheets, including this cover sheet. <input type="checkbox"/> This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e., sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT). <p>These annexes consist of a total of sheet(s).</p>																
3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:																
<table> <tr> <td>I</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report</td> </tr> <tr> <td>II</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Priority</td> </tr> <tr> <td>III</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability</td> </tr> <tr> <td>IV</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention</td> </tr> <tr> <td>V</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VI</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VII</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VIII</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application</td> </tr> </table>	I	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report	II	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority	III	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability	IV	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention	V	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement	VI	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited	VII	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application	VIII	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application
I	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report															
II	<input type="checkbox"/> Priority															
III	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability															
IV	<input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention															
V	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement															
VI	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited															
VII	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application															
VIII	<input type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application															

Date of submission of the demand 28 June 2000	Date of completion of the report 13 July 2000
Name and mailing address of the IPEA/AU AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaaustralia.gov.au Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929	Authorized Officer  VINCE BAGUSauskas Telephone No. (02) 6283 2110

V. Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement

1. Statement

Novelty (N)	Claims 1 - 14	YES
	Claims	NO
Inventive step (IS)	Claims 1 - 14	YES
	Claims	NO
Industrial applicability (IA)	Claims 1 - 14	YES
	Claims	NO

2. Citations and explanations (Rule 70.7)

None of the citations as shown in the ISR, discloses an unspun yarn, wherein at predetermined intervals the direction in which the reinforcing thread is wound around said main rope body is reversed, nor of a machine that to produce such a reverse twisting in an unspun yarn. Therefore the claimed invention is novel and inventive.